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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2003

THIS REPORT WILL PRESENT A TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER
THREE THEMES:

HEADLINES
BRIEFING
EDITORIAL OPINION

HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

Unlike Powell, Khatami opposes dialogue - Hurriyet
Bam quake melting ice between US, Iran - Milliyet
Bam quake toll rising: 50,000 dead - Hurriyet
Papadopoulos ready to discuss Annan Plan - Milliyet
Talat searching for an 'Annan government' - Hurriyet
Diyanet gives green light to New Year celebrations - Sabah
Saddam will be tried for killing 300,000 civilians - Turkiye

OPINION MAKERS

TGS urges Erdogan not to abandon Denktas - Cumhuriyet
TRNC leaders due in Ankara in January - Zaman
Syria blamed for providing arms to Iraq before war - Zaman
Letter bombs, attack fears: Europe's tense new year -
Cumhuriyet
Qadafi promises el-Baradei that Libya will turn a new page -
Cumhuriyet

BRIEFING

Cyprus: The MFA and TGS are expected to work together to shape a Cyprus proposal by the Turkish Government. Sensitivities of the military will be taken into account while making final adjustments to the plan. Prime Minister Erdogan was briefed about the plan by MFA officials on Tuesday. TRNC President and party leaders from northern Cyprus will be invited to Ankara in early January for a summit meeting at the presidency. Meanwhile, Turkish Cypriot prime-minister designate Mehmet Ali Talat said he was open to a broad-based coalition formula, as long as the new coalition would support negotiations with the Greek Cypriots on the basis of the Annan Plan. President Denktas has repeatedly said he favors a national unity government with the participation of all four parties represented in the Turkish Cypriot parliament. If Talat fails to form a new government, UBP leader Eroglu will be designated as prime minister. If no government is formed within two months, Denktas may call for early elections.

Force commander outraged by behavior at funeral: Land Forces Commander General Aytac Yalman condemned the behavior of devout worshippers who kissed the beard of an Islamic sect leader at a funeral in Istanbul. General Yalman said such behavior was 'out of step' with a modern Turkey seeking to enter the EU. 'I strongly condemn this mentality despite the fact that they still claim, despite all the contrary evidence, that they are loyal to the principles of Ataturk,' General Yalman said, vowing that the basic principles of the Republic will be protected. "Cumhuriyet" slams the authorities for turning a blind eye to those who aim to replace the regime in Turkey with a shariah administration.

AKP lawmaker draws criticism for remarks on Ataturk: Land Forces Commander General Aytac Yalman condemned AK Party lawmaker Husrev Kutlu for demanding that a portrait of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk that hangs in the parliament building and depicts Ataturk in field-marshal uniform should be

replaced with a civilian portrait of the founder of modern Turkey. Prime Minister Erdogan has ordered disciplinary party action against Kutlu. The TGS condemned Kutlu in a written statement on Wednesday for making 'irresponsible remarks.'

New Year celebrations universal - Diyanet: In contrast to earlier condemnations by fundamentalists claiming that New Year celebrations were inspired primarily by Christian traditions, the head of the Religious Affairs Directorate Prof. Ali Bardakoglu said that the occasion of New Year has become 'a component of universal culture' just like the Mothers' Day or Labor Day. Christmas is a religious holiday for Christians, Bardakoglu noted, whereas celebration on New Year's eve is a universal event and is therefore not in conflict with Islam.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Iraq; Libya

"2003-2004"

Hadi Uluengin analyzed in the mass appeal Hurriyet (12/31): "The year 2003 began with Iraq, and now it has ended with Iraq as well. The US and the coalition forces undoubtedly won the Iraq battle, yet the US has actually lost the war. Even though the capture of Saddam Hussein will probably be good enough for President Bush to be reelected, the US is still a loser from a long-term strategic perspective. . This assessment is based on three main indicators. First of all, stability and order in Iraq has not been established. Instead, the casualties among American forces are increasing. Second, the US administration continues to be blind to the importance of the Palestinian issue. Washington insists on not seeing the reality that the gist of the problems in the region stems from the Palestinian issue. Third, US relations with its European allies are at a low point. The Europeans remain distant from the US side, and transatlantic relations have never been worse in the post-World War II period."

"Qadhafi Decided to Be Smart"

Zafer Atay wrote in the economic-political Dunya (12/31): "Timing is sometimes very interesting. Qadhafi declared his decision to abolish Libya's WMD program right after the capture of Saddam Hussein. Yet this announcement did not happen overnight. Apparently, Qadhafi has been secret contact with the Americans and the British for some time. . According to American and British experts who visited Libya during the last three months, the Libyans had developed their nuclear technology more than had been previously thought. Nevertheless, Qadhafi decided to act smart as soon as he saw the footage of Saddam Hussein on television. In the end, it is very likely that the US will erase Libya from its list of rogue states and lift the trade embargo. There are some encouraging signs for cooperation with the US from Syria and Iran as well. These are all very positive developments. However, one part of this picture is still missing: Israel. Israel should also open its huge nuclear arsenal for international inspection."

EDELMAN